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DOCUMENTARY *film news*

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TURNING IT OVER

'Some make big ones, some make small,
More from each means more for all.'

So runs one of the new Government posters issued to exhort the factory worker to greater efforts.

But is the factory worker the only person who should make this contribution?

No, we've got a new Films Quota in England. From next October 45 per cent of the Main Features and 25 per cent of the supporting programme must be Made in England.

And this means more work for the British film worker—not just more employment but more work, better work and more co-operation.

The Exhibitors are groaning; they don't like it and they say that more exhibitors than ever will default on this quota.

Why not make more films and better films and show the exhibitors that they have nothing to groan about? It can be done.

The Americans are groaning; they say that this is the last straw.

Have they ever considered whether they would be content with a 45 per cent and 25 per cent quota for American films to be shown in America? We doubt it!

Mr Rank says it can be done—and for once we agree with him.

But it means better films, films made with more economy and with less time-wasting.

And in Documentary it means more interesting films, films with a sense of humour, films which do not try to preach but just to do what is the necessary function of every good film—to wit, to entertain.

The people stood for a lot of propaganda during the war—it was necessary then and Documentary made a real contribution to it.

But now it has a chance to prove that it has grown up—that it can make films the public will enjoy seeing—films which stand on their own merits and do not prop themselves up on the excuse of having a message to deliver.

The customer goes to the cinema first and foremost to be entertained. He does not pay out good money to have pompous propaganda rammed down his throat.

'Some make big ones' (Mr Rank and the other Main Feature boys).

'Some make small' (Yes! that's you, Documentary producer).

'More from each means more for all.'

Yes—more work, better work from each section of the industry will mean more employment, more films and a self-supporting British Film Industry.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

New Flaherty Film for Edinburgh

The Louisiana Story, a new film by Robert Flaherty, one of the world's most outstanding directors, will open the Second International Festival of Documentary Films in Edinburgh on Sunday, August 22.

'Nothing could please me so much as this great honour of showing the film at the Festival,' wrote Mr Flaherty in reply to the invitation to show his film which, on behalf of the Festival Committee, was conveyed by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

The Louisiana Story is Mr Flaherty's first feature film since he made *Elephant Boy* ten years ago in India. It is described as a dramatic fantasy about a Cajun boy in the Bayou marshlands of Louisiana. Over two years in production, it has just been completed and the Edinburgh showing will be its world *première*.

'The Louisiana Story,' Mr Flaherty has stated, 'is about a thirteen-year-old Acadian boy—Acadian is French-Canadian from Nova Scotia—who believes in mermaids and fairies. His father is a hunter living in the marshes. The film is a fantasy and in some way comparable to *Elephant Boy*. As with all our pictures, we first settled down in the locality to assimilate the everyday life of the people. We rented a house in the Cajun town of Abbeyville, Louisiana, and lived there, getting to know the inhabitants and obtaining their friendship and confidence, just as we did on the Aran Islands for *Man of Aran* and in Samoa where we lived in a native village for two years while making *Moana*. We let the story of the picture grow out of the people and the locality.

'It took us three months to find the boy to play the leading role, a search similar to the one that unearthed Sabu for *Elephant Boy*. This is one of the most important phases of making a movie of this kind. Since we do not use professional actors, it is necessary to find people who will fit the parts that are called for in the picture and who can "live" their roles. If you are careful and get people to perform what they have done all their lives, they can do it better than actors. Certain peoples, like the Irish, Negroes, Polynesians, Eskimos and Russians, I have found to be naturally wonderful actors.'

Mr Flaherty's historic *Nanook of the North*, a picture of Eskimo life made in 1921, was recently re-issued and was as successful as when first shown more than twenty-five years ago. During the war Mr Flaherty made *The Land*, a film on soil erosion for the United States Department of Agriculture.

The Labour Party Film

FOR THE past few weeks John Curthoys (director) and a team of script writers and actors have been busy producing a new Labour Party film. It is a three-reeler and is part of a new policy of the National Film Association, an organization jointly conceived by the Co-operative Movement, the Trades Union Congress, and the Labour Party to develop the use of 'visual aids' in the workers' movement.

Instead of the old-fashioned documentary, with its all-knowing commentator, this is a one-act screen play. It is a distinct advantage in these days of austerity to have a dash of entertainment in any message you may want to convey to a message-saturated public. This film puts as much emphasis on entertainment as message. The title of the film will be *Their Great Adventure*. The whole thing has been conceived, written and shot within two or three months.

John Curthoys is the director. The key part of the local MP is played by Cecil Trouncer, the Magistrates by Richard Ainley and Margery Bryce, the Chairman of the Court by Gordon Begg. For the rest, many other people have put an enormous amount of effort into the first Labour Party film—not least Mr George Wynn, the manager of the Co-operative Film Unit.

The whole Labour Movement is taking immense interest in the film's progress and its release is eagerly awaited. It is hoped that a London *première* will be arranged in the autumn, when full details of distribution, rental, etc., will be announced.

OLIVER TWIST

WHENEVER A film is made of a popular classic, there is an unfortunate tendency to make comparisons as to the suitability and accuracy of the film in following the development of the author's story and the importance of arriving at his conclusions. Latitude is granted to film-makers inasmuch as it is recognized that it would be impossible to interpret in terms of moving pictures every image evoked by the words of the writer. Deviation from the rigid structure of the original often produces feelings of nostalgia, or even of downright indignation that the work should have been treated with such apparent disregard. This is the natural reaction of a public with a healthy respect for their eminent writers, but it indicates a lack of appreciation of the film as an independent method of expression.

In attempting a true assessment of the merits of Oliver Twist it is necessary to dissociate the film from the novel. In this way it is possible to consider the film according to the standards of the medium in which it is made.

As most of us will remember the story of Oliver Twist involves a constantly changing scene. This unfortunate little boy who starts life in the lugubrious atmosphere of a workhouse, is transported from there to the home of an undertaker and later to a thieves' den in London; his temporary rescue by the kindly Mr Brownlow provides his one experience of comfort and security. This indicates the size of the canvas. It is impossible to stay any length of time in one place. For example, the workhouse, with its sordid atmosphere, its unhappy inmates, and complacent officials, must only occupy our attention for an all too brief space before we are hurried on to the home of Mr Sowerberry, the undertaker. Consequently instead of a rounded and finished product, the impression is that of a series of isolated episodes. Each of these episodes is vividly and beautifully portrayed, but because of the sharpness with which they are defined they do not blend to form an integrated whole.

The photography is imaginative, and it is a pleasure to see such an intelligent and exciting use of the camera. In the opening scenes, by means of dramatic cutting and photography, the extreme physical *malaise* of a woman about to give birth to a child is conveyed in a way better calculated to enlist our sympathy than a two-hour sound track of labour ward groans.

QUOTES ABOUT THE QUOTA

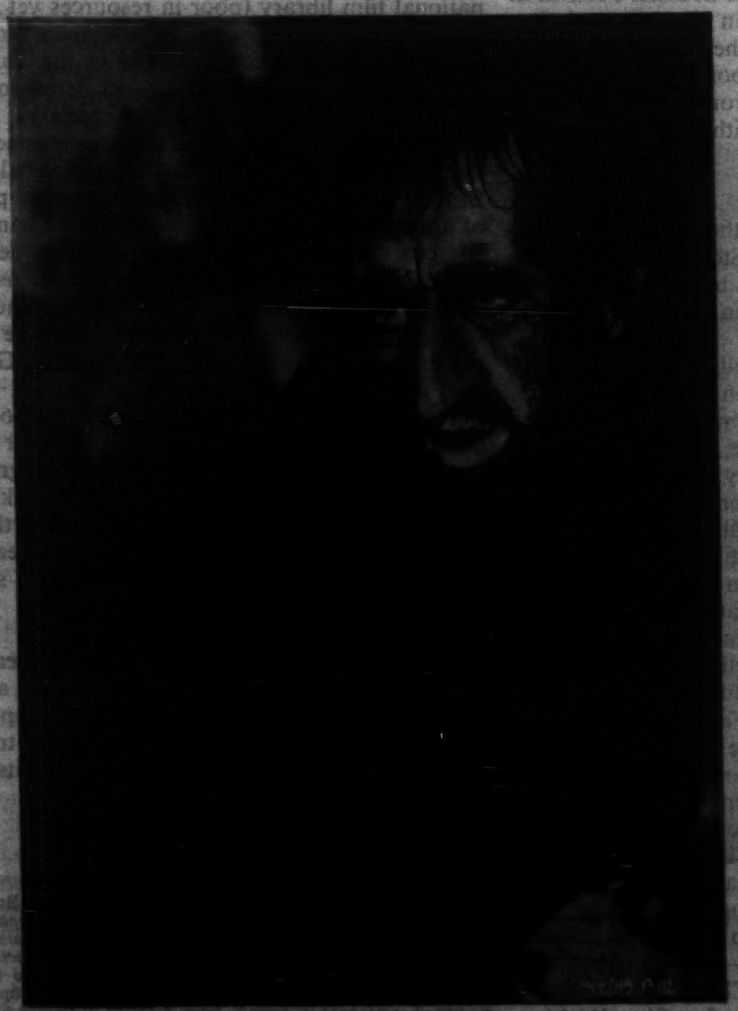
J. Arthur Rank: 'Already 60 per cent of the pictures shown on our circuits—Odeon and Gaumont—are British. We shall budget at least to maintain that figure. The new British quota is a very fair one, but this time we must see to it that all exhibitors do play British films and do not avoid their obligations.'

*

Ralph Bond (*Vice-President of ACAT*): 'It will certainly mean a big stimulus to production but, unless Mr Wilson keeps his repeated promises of financial help to independent producers, all the plums will go to the big combines and their American associates. The low quota for supporting programmes is a blow to documentary producers.'

*

Senior Executive of an American Company
'We cannot help but regard it as a direct effort to squeeze us out.'



Alec Guiness as Fagin in 'Oliver Twist'

H. D. Hughes (*MP and Chairman of Committee A*): 'The supporting programme is not financially, at present, an important part of the industry but, aesthetically and in terms of entertainment, it is an important part taking something just under one-half of the showing time. I fear the result of this low quota of 25 per cent will be that something only less than half of our screen time will be open to American second-feature and short productions which may be of a very low quality indeed. In fact, it seems to me that there is a danger in the difference between these two quotas that the American production, diverted from first-feature showing by the comparatively high first feature quota, will, in order to occupy surplus capital and to keep its name on the market, be forcibly diverted into the second feature and supporting programme, and will, in that way, artificially be induced to compete with a section of the industry which, on many occasions, the right hon gentleman and his predecessor at the Board of Trade have expressed their wish to encourage and promote.'

*

R. M'Laughlin (*Edinburgh Branch of Cinema Exhibitors Association*): 'Independents in this section view with alarm the proposal of the Board of Trade . . . as the supply of films is hopelessly inadequate to meet the quota.'

*

Sir Henry French (*Director-General of British Film Producers Association*): 'This quota must be complied with, and all exhibitors must play their part. It is absolute nonsense to talk about the need for 450 feature films a year to feed all the film demands of our cinemas.'

*

Eric Johnston (*President of Motion Picture Association of America*): 'This 45 per cent quota is excessive, unnecessary and impossible of fulfilment, and violates the spirit of the Film Agreement recently negotiated between the British Government and the United States film industry.'

*

'Daily Express' (*June* 15): 'The quota is unsatisfactory because it lays down that Britain, impoverished as she is, shall depend for more than half her films on imports from a wealthy creditor country. . . . Films made by American interests in this country will count as "British" for quota purposes. Yet all their earnings outside Britain will go straight into the pockets of the Americans. They will contribute not one cent to Britain's exchange position.'

*

'New Statesman and Nation' (*June* 19): 'Mr Wilson has kept British cinemas open by the Film Agreement. He has now quite properly demanded from exhibitors, in return for that boon, that they should support the home industry and, indirectly, that they should assist in financing it. There is no doubt that, given a chance, British film production can reach its new target.'

Tour in Belgium

by

JOHN MADDISON

John Maddison has just completed a series of lecture-shows of British scientific and documentary films in Belgium. The series was arranged by the Belgian Institut National de Cinématographie Scientifique with the help of the COI, the British Council and the Foreign Office

ONE FILM critic called the set of films I took to Belgium a 'valise d'images', and as Cleinge, Abel, Georges the lorry driver and I progressed with our transit-cases across Flanders and Wallonia in the May sunshine, we felt rather like pedlars. The audiences were film society members, university students and staffs, and secondary schoolboys and girls, in nearly a dozen towns and cities. The programme[1] was a solid one—two hours and a quarter of demonstration, exposition, persuasion and polemic. Yet if we missed any item from the advertised list, the customer always let us know of his disappointment.

Le porridge!

Seeing our films through the eyes of another people and trying to explain to them in their language why the films have been made, inevitably one experiences a freshened impulse to self-criticism. If documentary isn't to be a right little, tight little national enclave, opportunities must be given to our technicians (and not only the bagmen of documentary like myself) to see and feel their own work anew in the company of foreign audiences. This tour underlined for me at any rate two of the elements of documentary and teaching film production. First of all, there's commentary. Only two of the films shown (*Instruments* and *Cyprus*) were dubbed versions. I provided a makeshift French commentary for most of the others (except *The World is Rich*) as near as possible to the English scripts. I was made aware continually of the great importance of commentary in establishng a *rapport* between film and audience. There was, for example, always laughter and a surge of friendliness from the audience when, in *Life Cycle of Pin Mould*, I explained that the mould at one point was growing on 'le porridge'—and so identified it as inescapably British!

Visual Exposition

If commentary writers can hear themselves speaking what they write to a *living* audience, we may hope to escape the condescensions, the pomposities, the feeble cracks and the lumbering tautologies sometimes issuing from the sound tracks. The other factor is visual exposition—the need for absolute clarity and logic in the choice and arrangement of images. This is especially important now that British documentaries are regularly going to all parts of the world, even if some of them are dubbed into a score of languages. *How the Telephone Works* (I saw it a dozen times) is an object lesson; it was made in 1937.

Artistic Qualities

Experience showed that the films had been well chosen. I knew the audiences seeing them were used to French scientific films and shorts, and I warned them not to expect 'fantaisie' and visual fireworks. Lucidity and good sense were equally important, I maintained. But the critic of *Le Drapeau Rouge*, the Communist daily, stressed the artistic qualities of films like *Your Children's Eyes*, and in a long article in *Le Soir*, André Thirifays found all kinds of unexpected aesthetic virtues and excitements in the films. Those who remember Thirifays' comments on documentaries shown at the Brussels Festival in 1947 will know that he can be a severe judge. *The World is Rich* made the biggest impact on the audiences—I won't soon forget the comment of one of them, a Baron and a *bon vivant*. 'Ca m'indigne,' he said with feeling.

Henri Storck

One of the pleasures of the trip was to renew acquaintance with Henri Storck, witty, sincere and to my mind, still the best of the Belgian film directors. I saw again his *Easter Island* and for the first time *Idyll on the Sand* (1931), a film whose style reminds one that Storck once collaborated with Jean Vigo. Here in Britain, the new generation in the film societies would find them, I believe, enchanting. Apart from the child delinquency film he is making for the United Nations, Storck is now completing a film on Rubens. Paul Haesaerts, the art critic and scenarist of the film, showed me the script. It promises to be an extraordinarily interesting experiment in what is Paul Haesaerts' special line—the movie camera as a new mode for criticizing and interpreting painting. I also talked with Charles Dekeukelaire, whose recent book *Cinéma et Pensée*, reveals his search for greater profundity in the medium. Dekeukelaire's pre-war *Congo* is also a film which might well be revived for our film societies. He is at present discussing with the famous psychologist, Professor Michotte of Louvain, a film he is to make on Michotte's researches. My constant companions during the tour were two promising young technicians who have worked with Storck and Dekeukelaire, Charles Abel, the cameraman, and Jean Cleinge, a director. Cleinge has just finished his first film, *Héritiers du Passé*. This was an impossible assignment—a two-reel survey of the whole history of Belgian culture, made for the Army. In spite of this, Cleinge's film has movement and a sense of style, and his name is one to remember.

These young men are two of the active spirits behind the Institut National de Cinématographie Scientifique, formed only last year. The third and most important is its Secretary-General, Luc Haesaerts, barrister, and, with his brother Paul, the leading interpreter of modern Flemish art. The Institut's work is only beginning and to form an idea of Luc Haesaerts' character, one must turn to the Séminaire des Arts, a group activity largely initiated by him. On a semi-voluntary basis, it is the focus for a whole range of enterprises, including a little theatre, a children's theatre, a weekly journal, a musical society, a library of books, and a national film library (poor in resources yet but with a collection of some 400 German films). The Séminaire's headquarters is in the Palais des Beaux Arts, which itself must be an institution unique in Europe, and perhaps the world. The day we presented our programme of British films in one of the theatres of the Palais, Brailowsky was giving a recital in another part of the building, the Marionettes des Champs Elysées were playing Cocteau's Mariés de la Tour Eiffel with the Queen of the Belgians in the audience, a French feature film was showing in the Palais public cinema, and one of the finest exhibitions of French, Flemish, German and Italian paintings ever assembled, the Pinakotheka of Munich Collection, was going on in the galleries. In the April number of *Documentary Film News*, Sinclair Road wrote on *Art and the People*. Any forward thinking civic leaders who may have read his article might next investigate the Palais des Beaux Arts. After all, Brussels is much the same size for population as, say, Manchester.

The impression I brought away from the Institut National de Cinématographie Scientifique (heightened no doubt by its goodwill and friendliness) was of youthful hopes and purposiveness. But who could fail to warm to a country, one of whose film societies calls itself *Les Amis de la Lanterne Magique*?

---

[1] The films were, in whole or part, as follows: Extracts from *Film and Reality* (work by Urban, Bruce Woolfe, Canti and Russell Reynolds), *How the Telephone Works*, *Life Cycle of Pin Mould*, *Cracking*, *Children Learning by Experience*, *Your Children's Eyes*, *The Story of Penicillin*, *The World Is Rich* (for adults), *Cyprus Is an Island* (for schools), *Instruments of the Orchestra*, and three superb unedited sequences in colour, from a series of twelve films on agricultural pests which J. V. Durden of Photomicrography Ltd. is making for Shell.

Off With Their Heads!

by

JACK BEDDINGTON

Jack Beddington was, during the war, Director of the Films Division of the Ministry of Information. Before that, Publicity Director of Shell Mex Ltd. Was one of those who made the Government realize the value of the film in wartime propaganda

THE trouble with the documentary film world today is that the old gang is still in charge. It was, therefore, a great delight to me to hear considerable criticism of them by younger people at a private debate the other day.

It was equally a pain to me—though not a surprise—to find that with a notable exception none of the old gang were present to hear those criticisms, though they must have known that they were coming.

☆

The old gang twelve or fifteen years ago were pioneers wtih new ideas, great enthusiasms, courage and honesty. They are now middle-aged, much fatter or thinner than they were, and no longer potential geniuses. I cannot see that they have made any advance in the last five years. Humour they do not understand, criticism they resent. This is no state of mind with which to startle, tickle or impress the world.

I recently saw two films about housing, shown one after the other. About eleven years separated their dates of production. Apart from slightly better photography in the newer one, there was nothing to choose between them. There is, however, an enormous difference in the outlook of audiences today and those of eleven years ago. Documentary film-makers must get this into their heads.

☆

Before the war, there was a sympathy and a receptivity for the kind of work that they were doing. People were not conditioned by the frustration and brutality to which we are all now accustomed. This must be taken into account. We have had a terrible time for ten years and if film-makers want us to listen to them, they must either have something refreshing to say or a refreshing way of saying whatever is their theme. It seems to me that they are frightened by two of the simplest and most acceptable things in the world—humour and beauty.

☆

I need scarcely labour my point of humour because none of them will deny that they want to put it in their films. I must none the less point out that they cannot do so—as it were—on purpose. Humour in the sense in which I am using it must be spontaneous and can only come from those who have the gift of laughing at themselves. It does not necessarily consist of jokes, funny 'business' or epigrams; it does mean the presentation of human beings in the round with their good and their bad points, without sneers and—above all—not as types.

☆

This brings me to what I believe is the cardinal weakness of the old gang. They are consistently pressing a political point of view. It is, I believe, of no importance what that point of view is provided that it does not prevent the film being exciting or interesting or stimulating in its own right; but the moment a piece of propaganda in a film is considered of more importance than the film itself, the film is bound to fail and to preach to none except the converted. If only the old gang would realize this and even that their political points of view are both well-known and old-fashioned, they might be induced to give up intrigue and wire-pulling and come back to film-making.

☆

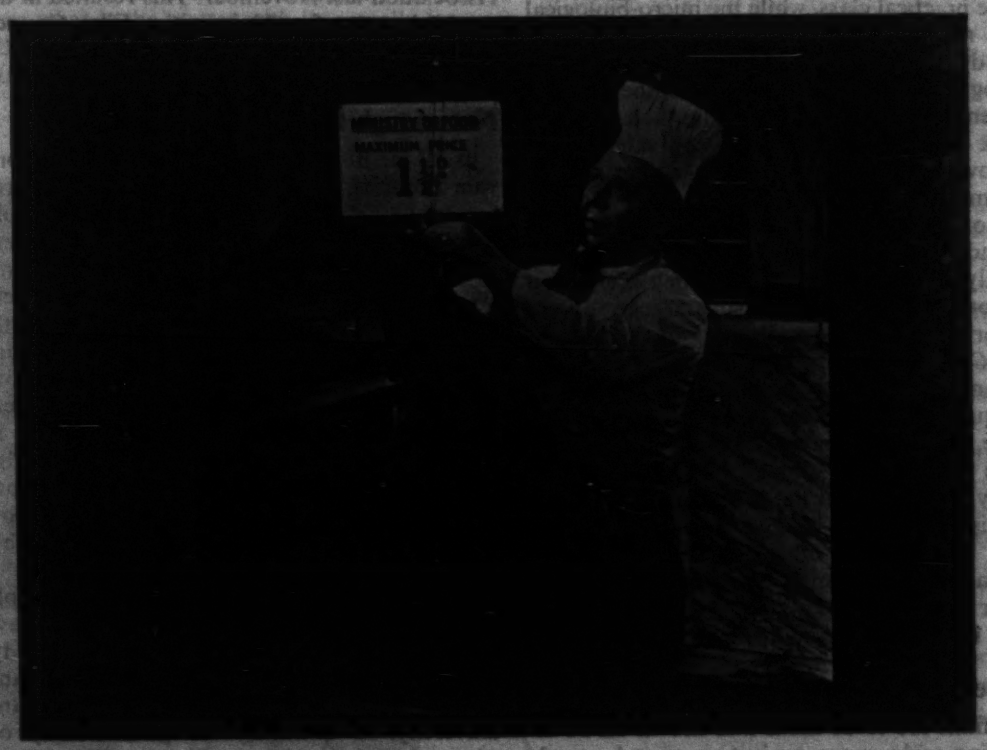
In their early days they freely announced that they were only using films for propaganda purposes, but in those days they were young and enthusiastic and deceived themselves in a more agreeable fashion than they do now. In fact, they loved making films and it was for this reason that beauty and humour crept in despite their *professed* attitude of abhorring the aesthetic. This is one of their silliest and most self-conscious tricks. I am glad indeed that it does not seem to be shared by the newcomers. They don't seem to me nearly so frightened of either laughing or crying and it is for this reason that I have great hopes for the future.

☆

I am carefully avoiding the old controversy of the appeal to the intellect as opposed to the appeal to the emotions. I don't really believe that any film-maker in any type of film-making consciously accepts such a difference. Some want to express their own theories of good and evil; some want only to entertain or to make money. All use the methods that come easiest to them. What comes through on to the celluloid is the essential quality of the makers. Some films come out dull or distorted, or difficult to understand. Some don't.

☆

I can only hope then that the newcomers will retain their enthusiasms and their energy and vigorously chase out the old gang as soon as possible.



A still from a new COI film on the Civil Service—the title is 'Answer Four Questions'

University Film Centre?

by

STANLEY OREANU

IT IS usual to think of the older universities clinging with the grasp of rigor mortis to ancient times and ways. One believes that behind the up-to-the-minute striving of bright young people, the core of the University lies in cloister courts in shy, melancholy men going up treadworn stairs to their rooms and in the same men planted out in rows at the Senate voting 'non placet' to every new measure. Though it would be unfair to give this vision the total lie, Oxford and Cambridge can sometimes assimilate new ideas with remarkable speed. The cinema in education is scarcely now a new idea, but in the use of films for higher education and research, Cambridge has recently given the lead to other universities and colleges in this country. That is not to say the question mark can be cut from my title or even that films are being made and used on a large scale, but there certainly is a wind on the heath.

Film is used

A number of departments use films for teaching and research at the present time. The Zoological laboratory has made studies of the movement of fish, invertebrates and ciliates, the Physiology department has produced a film on the technique of perfusing a rabbit's heart that has cut down the number of fiascos in the practical class, while the micro-biological films made at the Strangeways laboratory are already well-known outside Cambridge. Since biology is so much concerned with the study of movement and growth, biologists have been quick to seize on the film as a valuable aid. It is, however, the Engineering laboratory which has made the most extensive use of films as part of the regular academic course. First and second year students in this laboratory have a weekly cinema hour in which they are shown not only films covering many aspects of engineering but also sociological films, such as *The City*, likely to be of interest to them. The students are asked to grade the films according to quality of presentation and pedagogue value. The great majority of the films shown come from outside sources, but a few have recently been made in the laboratory.

It is not possible to give a detailed account here, but in many other branches of science, and also in economics and history films are either being used now or there is interest in their immediate possibilities.

More apparatus needed

If films are to be made and shown on an increasing scale, more projectors must be made available. It is a fact not always recognized that if you give a man a projector and he has any liking at all for gadgets, he will pretty soon look for something to run through it. A few months ago the University spent quite a large sum on the purchase of film equipment, so that now every department houses or has easy access to a projector.

But though we now have the means to show any number of films there are extremely few known to be of the required academic standard. Of many that perhaps exist, we have only the titles and of some not even that. It was the common need for information, for technical advice and for co-operation between different departments that led a number of lecturers, research workers and students to form the Educational Film Council at Cambridge in February of last year. After a good deal of fact-finding and propaganda, the Council has been recognized by the University to the extent that a yearly amount is paid as a joint subscription from all departments and the General Board of the Faculties appoints a representative to the executive committee. The Council soon realized that although it could do valuable work at Cambridge, even in the interests of Cambridge a more widespread organization was needed to gather information efficiently and to deal with such matters as training in film technique, the import of foreign films and co-operation in film-making between universities to cut and share out costs. At the invitation of the Council, a conference was convened by the British Film Institute and the Scientific Film Association last November. This resulted in the establishment of a Universities Film Council for the British Isles.

Not enough films

If all the films at present hidden away in private libraries, laboratory cupboards and professorial safes were made available we should be a little better off than we are now, but there would still be an enormous shortage of films suitable for university teaching and research. And studio-made films today cost the earth. One way of lowering costs is to use 'library material'. For example, historical films of considerable value could probably be made largely from newsreels. This use of material made in the first place for another purpose could also be planned ahead, so that in making say popular scientific or instructional films, extra shots might be taken and a film constructed suitable for academic purposes.

Many valuable films could be made cheaply and simply in the University and, as we have said, to some extent this is being done already. But there are shortages of equipment and trained personnel. Cambridge, or indeed any university, is unwilling to spend money on what they regard as non-essentials. Ergo cameras and so on will only be purchased when a loud enough noise is made by departments whose actual projects are held up for want of equipment. The training of research workers in film-making is now under consideration and the national Universities Film Council intends next year to arrange a summer school in cinematograph technique.

The Cambridge Council at first decided to advise on matters of film-making only when advice was asked for and not to take a more active and direct part. This was done in order not to offend departments hyper-sensitive to outside interference. It soon became apparent, however, that without active encouragement and suggestion very few films would be made at or for the University within the next few years. After attempts to obtain money from outside sources for academic film-making in general had understandably failed, the Council turned its attention to specific projects. A letter was sent to departments and faculty boards asking for details of films they intended to make or would like to see made. A number of positive replies have already been received. Soon the Council will be in a position to seek financial and other support for concrete propositions and to facilitate joint efforts in film-making with other universities. A few months ago a professor at the University of Utrecht wrote to the Council suggesting that some educational films should be made in Britain and Holland in such a way that they could be used in both countries. And if co-operation with Holland, then also with other countries in Europe and beyond.

The final aim

The 'ultimate aim' of the Council is the 'establishment by the University of a Film Centre with adequate facilities for the production, projection and storage of educational films'. To this end a memorandum was submitted to the General Board of the Faculties outlining the first suggested steps. This memorandum has had useful indirect effects, but no direct action has been taken on the lines laid out.

There is not going to be a Film Centre at Cambridge yet awhile, and there will not be one until more lecturers and research workers have taken an active part in making films and have a clearer idea of where and how they are going. But more and more films are going to be made, for people are coming to see both that language is not always the ideal medium for communicating academic ideas and that the cinema will not make an end to books. Indeed the Cambridge University Press has experimented with short film sequences as illustration for text-books and may go farther. In time the University must also sponsor research on films, for while it is relatively easy, given adequate technique, to make a film on biological cell division that all will see alike, different people may gain very different ideas from one that aims to portray the social background to Balkan history and who knows how many lessons are to be learnt from *Battleship Potemkin*?

A NEW MEDICAL FILM

reviewed by

A DOCTOR

The still from the Polio film shows the Doctor testing the patient

LAST YEAR there was the biggest epidemic of acute anterior poliomyelitis we have ever had in this country. At the height of that epidemic the Ministry of Health issued a 20-minute film *Poliomyelitis* 1947, to help general practitioners with early diagnosis of the illness. Thanks to the co-operation of the Central Office of Information projection service, that film was seen by 17,000 doctors and as many nurses in three weeks. The new film *Polio Diagnosis and Management* is a more ambitious film intended to be completed in time for any possible epidemic in this or future years. With digressions, it tells the story of a young man who gets acute anterior poliomyelitis and is treated and finally returns to work. The film starts with tables showing the amount of the illness in various places of recent years and goes on to mention how in a family some have merely fever and headache while others have the obvious illness with paralysis. Then we see a young man visit his doctor's surgery; the doctor gives him aspirin and sees him next day; suspects poliomyelitis and calls the Medical Officer of Health; he examines him and removes him to hospital, explaining the outlook to the family of the patient. The various types of muscle paralysis in this illness are demonstrated and the progress of the patient followed through to his building-up exercises and finally his return to work, still under supervision.

The film is designed for general practitioners and gives a good survey of the progress of a case with a suitable emphasis on the necessity of continuing treatment until and after the patient is back at work. It lasts 60 minutes and is very well photographed, directed and cut.

When one comes to ask what it is for, then problems crop up. If it is designed as a documentary to arouse the interest of general practitioners, it is surely reasonable to answer that any good general practitioner learnt enough during the excitement of last year's epidemic to give him a good working knowledge of the disease for the next few years.

If it is designed as an instructional film for young GPs, then it is wide open to criticism. As a patient I expect if I go to a GP complaining of a pain in the neck, he will examine my neck to see what is the matter with it: actually I expect that at any first visit my doctor will ask me to take off my shirt and lie down to be properly examined. In this film, the patient at the surgery is sent home without any proper examination; the next day the GP gives a cursory examination without testing the knee jerks with a hammer, and calls in the MOH who makes a rather inconsequent examination. Then we have repetitive sequences on the damages to various muscles.

The film is an example of the short-sighted economy of the film makers at the Central Office of Information. One does not expect the Ministry of Health to know how to make good teaching films. One does expect the COI to. Until they realize that to make a good teaching film you need a good teacher as well as a good film director and a good technical expert, the chances of getting good teaching films from COI will remain low.

There is at present no need for a documentary on acute anterior poliomyelitis for doctors. There is quite a good case for one for the public. Last year's film had bad titles but said two or three things about early diagnosis clearly and left time for discussion. The early parts of this year's film are like any US film. The shots of a lecturer and of his chart are not film, they are film strip material.

But what is needed from COI is a number of shorter, more modest films on the common illnesses, rheumatism, tuberculosis, whooping cough, and so on. The film is an expensive medium and in our impoverished condition we cannot afford yet to deal intensively with a rare malady such as acute anterior poliomyelitis.

Polio Diagnosis and Management will be a useful and popular addition to the films for general practitioners.

From the new Crown monthly release 'School in Cologne'

The Film ★

Polio Diagnosis and Management, 1948. Made by Crown Film Unit. *Director:* Geoffrey Innes. *Photography:* Jonah Jones.

Gregg Toland, Film-maker

Part 2

Reprinted by kind permission of the 'Screen Writer'

"A girl is often so old by the time she proves her ability that out comes the burlaps in front of the lens."

GREGG is a man with opinions who is not afraid to air them, and as a result he is not known for his ability to make himself popular with other cameramen. Recently Gregg showed me a telegram he sent to a very well-known colleague of his. In it, he deflated that gentleman considerably for taking credit in a magazine article for a 'new' development in lighting technique. Gregg pointed out how ridiculous his colleague's claim was, and added that he himself had used the same 'new' technique several years before.

'I hope —— has a sense of humour,' Gregg said.

'I think he'll need more than a sense of humour. He isn't going to like you very much when he sees this.'

'Well, that's all right,' Gregg said, grinning. 'I do this sort of thing all the time. They resent it, but they're probably used to it by now.'

In response to my questions, Gregg gave me a few of his views which have not served to endear him to members of the ASC. 'In my opinion,' he stated, 'there are about twenty really top cameramen in the world. I would say that about twelve of them are in Hollywood. The others run from "adequate" to "use only if necessary".'

'What's the trouble with them?' I asked.

'Well, most of them take the road of least resistance. They do whatever is easiest. But worse than that, I think too few cameramen realize dramatic and story values. They don't keep abreast of current plays and books. Their interest seems to centre mainly on how late a call I can manage in the morning to how early can we finish today.'

'We hear many criticisms about Hollywood's lack of maturity in terms of story material,' I pointed out, 'but it is taken for granted that the technical job Hollywood does is the finest in the world. How does this fit in with what you just said?'

'I disagree that all our technical jobs are done as well as they can be done. For instance, I feel that too many cameramen are apt to work out a certain key which they can handle, and then photograph everything, tragedy or comedy, in the same way. They don't work to adapt their style to their story. Furthermore, cameramen often have ideas which might entail extra work on their part, and which they don't suggest to the director for that reason. I'll give you a theoretical example which will give you some idea of what I mean:

'Supposing the script indicates a group of partisans making plans for a raid. In the far corner is the leader's girl. She listens, worried.

'One approach to this might be a group shot and several tighter shots, always with the leader as the focal point. The director might plan to make cuts of the girl listening. Now, the cameraman might suddenly think, "It would be better to start with a group, slowly move past intent faces, with the leader always in the background. The camera nears the leader and then slowly pans into a big close-up of the girl. We see how upset she is, and we dissolve on her doubt." Our cameraman thinks that might be swell, but does he bring it up? Well, let's see: it would mean a large problem in lighting faces with lights that would miss a camera shadow. It would involve focus of foreground faces and background faces; also a problem of sliding diffusion as the camera pans to the girl; also he probably couldn't get the light exactly where he wanted it for the girl due to camera movement. So, does he mention it? No, indeed. Why stick out his neck? Even though his idea would have furthered the dramatic tension of the scene and planted the girl's worry more pointedly, our cameraman will go along with the no more than adequate idea of the director. That's what I mean by taking the path of least resistance.'

'Okay,' I said, 'suppose all you've said is true. It is particularly the fault of the individual cameraman, or is there a deeper fault?'

'Yes, I think there is,' Gregg said. 'A great many of the stories we make aren't very stimulating. Sometimes you wonder why they're made at all. That's not a great inducement to do your best work. I know when it's been my misfortune to have to photograph one of those run-of-the-mill pictures, I've been pretty unhappy. There's absolutely no opportunity for ideas. I've said to my wife, "I feel just like a whore, doing it for money. If I had any guts, I'd quit this picture and we would go down to Rio, or some place." But you never do. You just keep on hoping that the next opportunity will be better. I suppose that's the human weakness of comfort and security.'

'You sound exactly like any number of writers who've had to write that stuff you didn't like,' I told him.

'Well, they haven't got any monopoly on frustrations, you know.'

'I'm sure it'll make them much happier to hear that. By the way, what about writers in relation to cameramen. Do you think closer liaison is practical?'

'Definitely,' said Gregg. 'The cameraman should be asked to sit down with a lot of other people on the picture *before* production, and that would include the writer. I am positive that great production economies can be effected by cameramen and writers discussing the script.'

'Here's a question a lot of writers would like to have answered: What happens to the camera directions they put into their screenplays in capital letters? You know, CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY TO, HIGH ANGLE SHOT, CAMERA TRUCKS, MEDIUM CLOSE, REVERSE TWO SHOT BUD PAST BEULAH, and so on?'

'The answer to that is pretty simple. Directors and cameramen over the years have developed a method of reading scripts so they do not see these directions at all.'

'Is that your last word on the subject?'

'No, the director can't work out staging and mechanics in his office, so why should the writer worry about trucking shots, panning shots, boom shots and all the rest? Usually he's talking about a subject of which he has a very limited knowledge. (Although I'll grant most writers have had no opportunity to learn.) Writers like Sherwood write in master scenes, and don't go into detailed camera instructions. That's the way it should be. My advice to writers, especially the younger ones who are feeling their way in the medium, would be to concentrate their worrying on the content of the scene and the dialogue.'

AMONG other factors which keep cameramen from doing more creative work, Gregg includes the unimaginative quality of a great deal of

directing. There are quite a few old-fashioned, tired directors who are still coasting on past reputations. And there are also quite a few directors who find it difficult to work up much enthusiasm for run-of-the-mill assignments, and are content with doing a routine job of turning pieces of paper into pieces of celluloid.

'When you're working with a director with no enthusiasm for what he's doing, it's hard for the cameraman to get enthused,' Gregg said. 'If the director makes a two shot, and then a couple of close-ups, and plays every scene the same way, no cameraman in the world can exert much creative energy. And then there's the director who wants to make his set-ups "exciting" and tries to use a 30 mm lens all the time. This can drive a cameraman crazy, because you can't use a wide-angle lens without a knowledge of how and when to use it.

'Or you get the director who wants to move his camera all the time. My own view is that there is a sensible point of view in between static set-ups and constant movement. I've gone to both extremes in *Long Voyage Home* and *Citizen Kane*. Now I think a better point of view has been reached with Willy in *Best Years*. We didn't have any preconceived rules; we moved when it seemed that helped tell the story best. Camera movement shouldn't be noticed, because it takes your attention from the actors, and what is happening to them. Yet, some directors, because a scene has a great deal of dialogue, have the extremely false notion that camera movement will make the scene *appear* to move. This doesn't help the cameraman any, either.'

Going on from these specific criticisms, Gregg feels that the industry in general should be criticized. He feels good pictures aren't being made, and he feels that you can't blame audiences. He has quite a healthy respect for the quality of the American audience, and doesn't believe that pictures have to be geared to the level of the twelve-year-old mind to be successful.

In general, his main criticism is, he believes pictures have lost reality and imagination. They are conventional in writing, direction and photography. One of his deep resentments is the star system.

'It means we are making pictures with a "personality" rather than story. That's why many cameramen are forced to sacrifice everything in order to keep some old bag playing young women. And when I say old bag, that's what I mean. A girl is often so old by the time she proves her ability that out comes the burlaps in front of the lens.

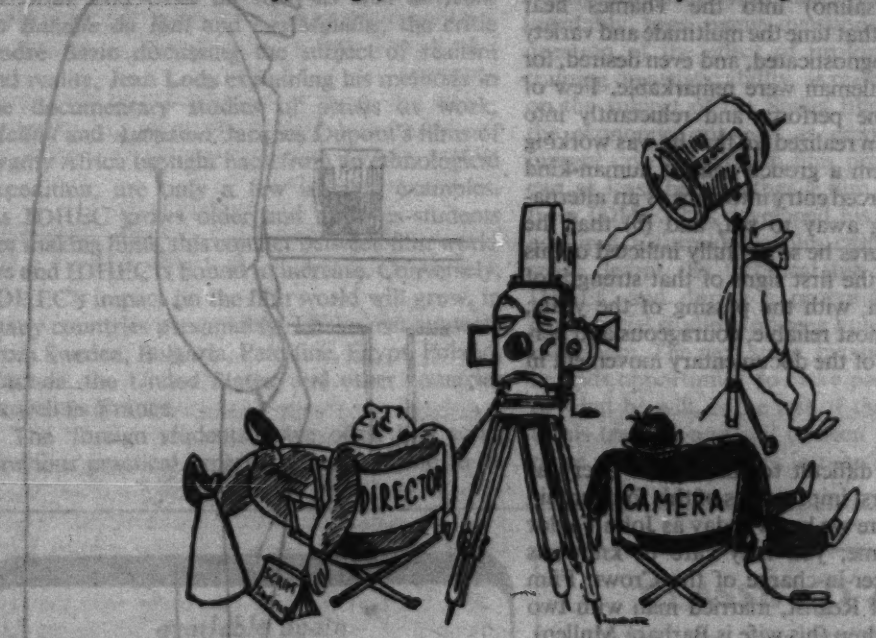
'The average producer will answer that he has to protect his investment. But why not protect it with a good story, script and director, and then cast it with the best actors for the parts, not box-office names. I know the answer to that one, too: "Pictures are a business for profit." So they are, but it would be fine once-in-a-time though, to see an honest motion picture.

'Aren't you tired of seeing some glamour star playing a shopgirl in New York, living in an apartment that would cost ten times her monthly salary, wearing dresses that she couldn't possibly afford, and with a hairdo that you can only get by coming to a movie studio and having a staff of specialists create for two hours before you come on the set?'

I admitted I was tired of it, and he sighed, 'I could go on and on, but why?'

'Well,' I said, 'partly because it's good to get it out of your system, and mostly because I want to know how you feel so I can write a proper interview.'

'In that case,' he said, 'I'll go on. A lot of people won't like this, but I think it's true. At least, it's the way I've seen it from the inside over a period of years. I think fewer creative pictures are being made these days as compared to 20 years ago because most of the people directly responsible are more smug and better paid. The unions protect many positions, where in the old days it was touch and go. In those days any youngster could start in the picture business, if he had the stuff. Salaries were much smaller, but I think there was a greater pride of achievement. Generally speaking, most people today have the attitude that everything has been tried and present methods are the best. Now, I'm not saying the back-lot people all have economic security, or even all the so-called creative or talent groups are living off the fat of the land. I'd say, though, that what I've said is too true of the people who make the decisions, and who are in the last analysis responsible for what goes on in this town.



If you're working with a director with no enthusiasm, it's hard for the cameraman to get enthused.

'Naturally, I don't speak of the few persons who have a burning desire to accomplish things, but who are usually held down by a production office or a producer with a "Why take a chance?".

'That's why making *Citizen Kane* was so wonderful. Orson Welles (who directed it) and I had a wonderful time. It was the first time I had encountered anyone with the authority to do *anything* and not be confronted by the front office. I suggested and tried things I'd been dreaming of for a long time.

'We made mistakes in it, but we also did a few startling things which people still discuss. I might add that one reason for many of the effects was a lack of money. We just couldn't afford to have an audience in the opera house when the camera was shooting from behind Dorothy Comingore, the singer. So we *thought*. I put up a series of baby shots in a black opera set and trained them at the camera. I believe that the ultimate effect was more desirable than an expensive audience of extra people. This is an example of what I said earlier. People out here no longer ponder; they no longer have the same challenges to meet. There is money enough, so they build enough set for safety—just in case they need it. And so it goes—everyone protects himself, and everything sails along just fine.

'*Kane* may not be a great picture, but I honestly believe it excited more comment and made more people snap out of their complacency than any other picture in years.

'By the way, I want to be sure to make this point. I have worked under contract to Samuel Goldwyn for many years and some people might have the mistaken notion that I am saying these things in criticism of him. That is definitely not the case. I sincerely believe that Goldwyn will allow me more freedom, more experiments and more ideas than anyone at the moment. I do not say this to protect my contented feeling, as Goldwyn may have my contract back any morning he chooses, and without a settlement, and he knows it. I say it because I believe he tries harder than any other person in this industry. This doesn't mean that he is always right, but he *tries*. I wish more people did.'

In Hollywood today, where the tendency is toward a standardized product, and toward conformity on all levels, citizens like Gregg Toland have a value far beyond their skills or techniques. As individualists, they have the ability to subordinate themselves and their work to the co-operative creative process. Yet they retain their personalities and identities. Because he has a personality, Gregg has personal opinions, and they are reflected in the pictures he makes. Too many people in Hollywood have given up the fight to retain their identities, and when asked for opinions, answer 'I can do it whichever way you want', rather than 'I think it would be better this way'. In a community where so many people are loth to speak their minds, men like Gregg are good to have around.

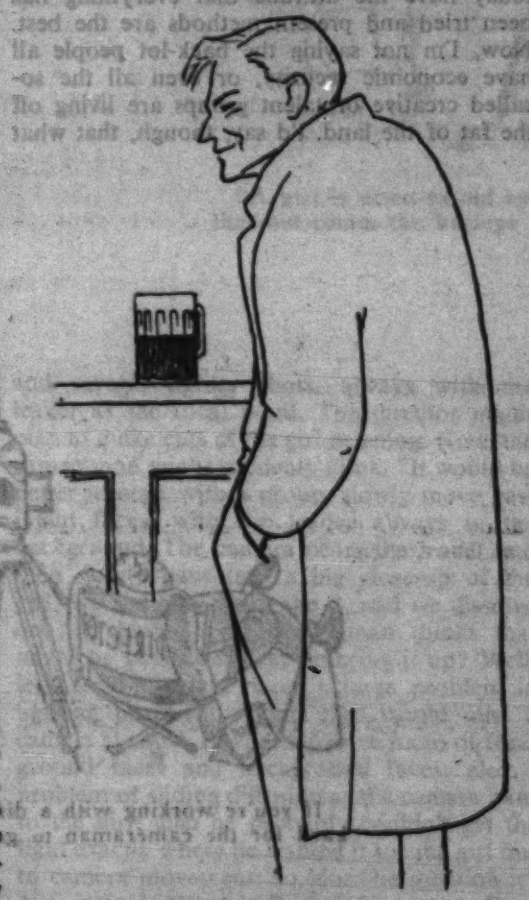
He may not always be right, but at least he tries.

John Taylor

A Close-up

by

B. W.



EARLY in AD 1930 there entered the dingy cutting rooms of the EMB Film Unit (then three souls strong) a plump and repulsive small boy who had clearly graduated, *multa cum laude*, from Dr Will Hay's noted academy. This boy was soon voted impertinent as well as repulsive; he jammed the spike of a Debrie tripod on to J. D. Davidson's foot and knocked Grierson's hat (a very fine Borsalino) into the Thames near Gravesend. At that time the multitude and variety of bad ends prognosticated, and even desired, for this young gentleman were remarkable. Few of those who came perforce and reluctantly into contact with him realized (*a*) that he was working out of his system a grouch against human-kind caused by his forced entry into films as an alternative to running away to sea, and (*b*) that the adolescent tortures he so skilfully inflicted on his superiors were the first signs of that strength of character which, with the passing of the years, made him the most reliable, courageous and persistent member of the documentary movement in Great Britain.

It would be difficult to find so far a cry as that from our first impressions of this foul urchin to the solid figure we know today as John Taylor (his middle name, you may care to know, is Elston), producer-in-charge of the Crown Film Unit, creator of Realist, married man with two uproarious children (his wife is Barbara Mullen), and proprietor of an impressive estate which is somewhat cluttered up not only by extensive asparagus beds but also by the micro-manipulator and other accessories of Photomicrography Ltd—another Taylor creation.

To be quite truthful, only a short period elapsed between John's press-ganging into documentary and his emergence as a valuable addition to a movement whose speed of development in those early days called for great intensity of work and an enthusiasm for films which some contemporary technicians might well emulate. John became a good camera-assistant, a good cutter, and a good getter-on-with-any-job. He was assistant to Flaherty during the period of *Industrial Britain*, and if you get him and Golightly into a good mood they will tell you what happened in Birmingham one autumn evening in 1931. He so impressed Flaherty that he was pinched from the EMB and worked on *Man of Aran* from beginning to end. For the record, let it be remembered that John Taylor, who was still quite a kid, ran the location laboratory which Flaherty set up in Aran, and that the bulk of the negative passed through his hands.

He came back from his Irish sojourn both wiser and wilder. Almost immediately he had to buy a dinner jacket and a tropical outfit and go on location in Ceylon where, thanks to careful arranging, he never had to carry anything heavier than the superbly equipped Leica which Flaherty had given him after the Aran film. Again for the record, let it be remembered that the enormously comprehensive set of stills of most aspects of Ceylon—many of which dealt with subjects not in the film—were entirely his work; and that as a location organizer he proved magnificent.

Round about this time John began to feel that his education had been too rudely interrupted by the claims of documentary, and with everyone's blessing and approval he took a year off and studied the Arts, etcetera, at the University of Edinburgh. John has always had an instinctive and indeed uncannily accurate appreciation of true values, with the result that the academic opportunities of Edinburgh were quickly and usefully absorbed, and he acquired one of the few attributes he had hitherto lacked—the ability of organized thinking. To this he shortly added a pungent, individual and effective prose style which he should employ (at least in the interests of documentary journalism) much more frequently than he does.

At this period, too, he emerged as a film director. Eastwards he flew, shooting with Strand for Imperial Airways at Bahrein, and then, in solitary state but with Arthur Elton's blessing, directing and photographing that extraordinary study of an oriental country on to which a dictator was billposting Western technologies—*Dawn of Iran*.

Then, with Elton and Anstey, he worked (and how he worked) on *Housing Problems*. On this film he was partnered on location by the ever-lamented Ruby Grierson. This partnership continued on many films afterwards, culminating in that lovely and simple film of the early war days —*They Also Serve*, which, in effect, they made together.

Reverting, however, to chronology, John then joined Realist as a director and made *The Smoke Menace* and *The Londoners*. The latter was one of the first feature-length dramatized documentaries, and people might as well realize right now that John's reconstructions of Victorian London —done in a small studio and not with all that amount of money—still match up to a lot of much more elaborate stuff which has come out of the camera in subsequent and more luxurious days.

It was about this time that the then producer and managing director of Realist, convinced that the journey to Carey Street was imminent, presented the tottering firm to John Taylor, and fled to the flesh pots of Film Centre. Since that day Realist has never looked back. During the war years it became the focal point of forthright production—so much so that some of its best films were consigned to the deepest *oubliettes* of the MOI immediately the show-copy was ready. In the war years John, with Frank Sainsbury and Max Anderson as constant aides and boon companions, was responsible for an output of films whose variety, high standards, and integrity could not be equalled by any other unit. This happened because John Taylor made himself become a really superb producer. Commanding then, as he does now, the absolute loyalty, confidence and respect of those who work with him, he built up at Realist a team of film-makers (and a very large one at that) which was—and still is under Brian Smith—pretty nearly unbeatable.

Today he is at Crown—the first producer of that Unit to show not the slightest sign of a nervous breakdown. His appointment to this post was significant. John Taylor has never sought, nor pretended to, the frills and furbelows of civil service diplomacies. He frequently appears to be almost inarticulate—a Machiavellian tactic which has caused many a fly Whitehallite to bite the dust. For John knows very well what he is up to; he is after producing the best films on the most-needed subjects, and behind what ap-

(*Continued foot of column* 3, *opposite page*)

Notes on the Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques

by Ruth Partington

IDHEC's own official publications state clearly its aim and activities, describe its methods, and syllabus. They show how a hundred or so students, French and foreign, are selected and given a two or three years' training to prepare them to realize ambitions to be director, producer, sound engineer, cameraman, decorator, costume designer, cutter or script girl. The public relations side of IDHEC's work may be judged from its programme of outside lectures and projections; members of the general public may also obtain permission to use the library, and may buy IDHEC's publications, the *Cahiers* and the *Bulletin*. So perhaps more personal impressions, gained as if for a documentary treatment over a period of months, would be more useful in 'bringing alive' this training school for film workers, an exciting experiment.

Its students only number about a hundred all told and are concentrated into a converted house with library, studio, lecture rooms and practical workshops of small dimensions. Perhaps this accounts for the personal and lively atmosphere of the place by comparison with the Sorbonne for instance where thousands of students arrive and disperse every day. Or perhaps IDHEC students are all film fanatics devoted to the same drug? Certainly the student community on the fringe of the film world is small: one meets the same people at ciné-clubs all over Paris, at the Cinématheque and in specialized libraries and at amateur cinéma-circles.

But IDHEC itself is the focal point of this world and provides a bridge with the activity of film making. This possibility of contact with film critics and creators is at least as important as the more academic side of the programme. The actual usefulness of the full week's timetable of lectures on literature, history, geography, aesthetics, in relation to the cinema, as well as film history and practice, may be doubted more than its excellent intention. But the value of direct and frequent contact with films and film authorities is at once evident. The staff itself is outstanding; Léon Moussinac, new director of the school, is one of the most profound of French film critics, well known for his books on the Soviet cinema and the film in general as well as for his poetry and fictional writing. He is assisted by Jean Lods, one of France's few established documentary film makers. Among authorities lecturing regularly on their subjects are Georges Sadoul and Jean Mitry on film history. But the circles spread wider. Part of the regular week's programme, shared by first and second year students are the Tuesday projection of a new film by its director, and Monday evening lecture—projections by a visitor, alternating with a session in the special documentary series that has been given this winter. The visiting speakers, critics or directors are ready to give explanations and answer questions from this small specialized audience. The meetings are often extraordinarily interesting and valuable. Giuseppe da Santis showing *Caccia Tragica*, René Clément showing extracts from his early documentation *La Grande Pastorale* and *Ceux du Rail*, as well as from *La Bataille du Rail* and *Les Maudits*, the critic André Bazin discussing the subject of realism and reality, Jean Lods explaining his methods in the documentary studies of artists at work, *Maillol* and *Aubusson*, Jacques Dupont's films of pygmy Africa brought back from an ethnological expedition, are only a few isolated examples. As IDHEC grows older and more ex-students are making films, this contact between film workers and IDHEC is bound to increase. Conversely, IDHEC's impact on the film world will grow, in many countries presumably. I have met students from Sweden, Bulgaria, Palestine, Egypt, Poland, Canada, the United States, and other countries as well as France.

The 'foreign students' have often had some previous practical experience, and so tend to be older than their French counterparts, and more ready to criticize the lack of sufficient practical training provided by the present material resources of IDHEC. In fact the programme of the school seems bound to develop a critical sense, but its effect on creative ability is less obvious.

Any straightforward description of IDHEC inevitably begs many questions—the aesthetic question of the effect of prolonged theoretical training on artistic ability, as raised by Dovjenkho on the subject of the Soviet film academy, and the economic question as emphasized by the present crisis in French film production. But it can at least be said that a film worker coming from IDHEC has developed his general culture, acquired a formidable film culture and critical sense, learnt the technical use of his tools at IDHEC and during a probationary period in commercial studios and seen how other men have used them. The next stage, his use of them where he finds opportunity, to make poetry or publicity or what he will, is the test of the individual and of his training and will be seen more clearly as more students graduate into active production.

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JOHN TAYLOR (*cont.*)

pears so often as a quiet and amiable facade there is a toughness and a persistence which few operators in the field can overcome. His producership of Crown can be reckoned as the best thing which has happened to that Unit since it used to live at Blackheath and called itself GPO.

And now, children, you will want to know about Taylor the Man. From one angle that is easy. He is quite good at darts, an excellent swimmer, likes, but is useless at, fishing, is devoted to music hall, is one of the greatest living experts on the art of W. C. Fields, drinks Guinness with pleasure, and, if you have the good fortune to achieve such an honour, is the best friend you are ever likely to acquire in all your puff. But from another angle he is less easy to describe. His close friends realize that he keeps a special and secret John E. Taylor locked deep inside himself—a tough baby, and as honest as Adam before the fall. It is from this secret recess that there emerges that absolute integrity which makes him of such unique value to documentary.

CORRESPONDENCE

Agricultural Films

SIR,

'Technician's' tetchy article on the SFA Films in Agriculture Conference has had at least one valuable result. It has stimulated Mr Mervyn Reeves into writing some valid and useful criticism, in your May 1948 issue.

As he says, we have few if any objective data about rural audiences, their rate of and capacity for film assimilation, their comparative response to sound and silent films, their views on commentators, and so on. Facts on all these and other similar points would be of great value to film-makers (who genuinely prefer to do a useful rather than a useless job) and to the people in the Ministries, COI, NAAS, and other organizations who have to suggest, commission, supervise and use the films.

Two questions now arise, and I ask them not with the object of scoring any debating points, but because I want to know the answers.

(*a*) Whose job is it to get these facts?

(*b*) How is he going to get them?

It is no good saying 'How nice it would be to have some facts!' and then sitting back. If it would be as nice as all that, then they have to be got. Getting them is going to occupy some man-hours. Man-hours cost money. Therefore, somebody, or some body, has got to make itself responsible—has got to assume the financial and moral burden of getting the facts, interpreting them and making them available? Who, or what, is the correct, competent and willing body to do this?

Granted that the work is to be done, the question of method has to be tackled. The facts must be facts, not subjective and contradictory personal impressions. The technique of this kind of fact-finding is not very highly developed at present, and analogous work in the entertainment and child-education film fields has yielded some results which are susceptible to more than one interpretation. I venture to suggest that no acceptable standards against which audience-reaction results can be measured for significance and validity have yet been devised. The very methods of experimentation are yet in their infancy.

Investigation will have to be carried out on a fairly large scale if results are to be reliable, because there are a large number of variables involved, not all of which are exactly measurable—statistical levelling is, therefore, necessary. Further, I have the impression that the reactions of audiences to, at any rate, the instructional kinds of film change rather rapidly with the number of films seen. If this is true it suggests that the fact-finding ought properly to be regarded as a continuing rather than a once-for-all job.

I am not saying all this with the object of discouraging fact-finders. My point is that useful fact-finding is not going to be dead easy, and I rather suspect that even when the facts have been found they will be somewhat difficult to interpret.

The job ought to be started, and the sooner the better, but I think we must not expect a golden shower of understandable results in the first week or two.

Yours faithfully,

355*a Finchley Road* JOHN SHEARMAN
Hampstead, NW3

How, What and Why

SIR: Having seen the film *How, What and Why* reviewed in your June number, I feel that I must take issue with your reviewer on the item concerned with the pulse.

'No indication,' he says, 'is given at the end of the significance of the difference of pulse rate with which the doctor is concerned.' What, indeed, would he have in a three minute item designed for children?

But perhaps he does not know that the significance of pulse variations (in which rhythm and volume are concerned just as much as rate) is a complex subject which could fill quite a large text-book? In a film of this type it would be impossible to make any statement which would not be misleading or inaccurate without qualification. Quite rightly the film-makers refused to attempt it and confined themselves (at the end!) to the statement that the pulse varied in health and disease, and that these variations gave the doctor an indication of the state of health of the body. That, surely, is answer enough for a twelve-year-old. So far from indicating careless scripting, this particular item seems to me to illustrate the precise reverse.

Yours etc.,

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